

**Meet Ayesha Madon; Gen Z's New Chaotic Leading Lady.
The Australian Actress Breaks Down Everything That Went Down In The Second Season
Of Heartbreak High, Her New Single And The Next Chapter Of Her Career.
By Victoria Goldiee.**





Mainstream television has a longstanding history of pushing women of color to the side by making them unjust victims or fetishised love interests. But in Netflix's reboot of *Heartbreak High*, each major event leads back to Amerie (played by Ayesha Madon) often prompting the audience to question her involvement and the impact it would have on her throughout.

Amerie is a multi-dimensional character, her moments of vulnerability and despair are equally matched with times of fearlessness and power. She's a confidante to her friends, a desirable partner, rebellious daughter and above all, just an Australian teenager trying to survive school. For the first four episodes of season two, we see Amerie grapple with a growing hate train by an anonymous person named 'Bird Psycho', a love triangle with her situationship 'Malakai' (Thomas Weatherall) and a new student 'Rowan' (Sam Rechner) and trying to prove her integrity to the whole school. However, by the season finale, Amerie decides to tackle these issues head-on and reconnects with her inner child thereafter becoming a better version of herself.

For Madon, channeling the inner peace she felt on the inside was how she could properly embody Amerie's character growth on the outside. " Amerie goes on this reflective and important journey throughout the season where she learns to forgive and allow herself to be human. I felt so privileged to be able to show viewers her more mature side in the best way I could."

What was your initial reaction when you read the script for season two especially for the season finale?

We usually get the scripts as they are written in batches so when I got the finale episode script, I had to take a step back because I was so shocked and gobsmacked. I appreciated how much the writers had leveled up from season one and found myself wondering where they were going to go with the storyline next season.

Do you feel different about playing Amerie this season?

When I was filming the first season I was very anxious about being able to accurately portray Amerie to my best knowledge but seeing myself on screen after the release allowed me to gain more confidence and experience which helped me understand the show and how I could play Amerie better in season two.

We get to see more of Amerie and Harper's (played by Asher Yasbincek) Friendship In Season Two Compared To Last Season Where They Spent A Large Part Of The Show At Loggerheads. How different was working with Asher now, was it easier for you guys to act without all that angst?

Asher and I were so excited and relieved to finally be able to be friends onscreen, we are very close in real life and I think our friendship off-screen shines through onscreen this season.

Amerie steps into her leadership and investigative era as she's campaigning for school captain and also trying to find out the identity of Bird Psych. How did you think to embody this?

I think Amerie is a very focused person, she works hard to succeed at her objectives in full force and this time around the stakes were higher. This is something I feel a lot of teenagers experience as their emotions are at a heightened level so I tried to put myself in the same shoes as her in that moment.

How soon into the season did you find out the identity of the bird psycho and what were your first thoughts?

All of us cast members played a fun guessing game on who it would be but when it got revealed halfway through filming, I was the only one to guess who it was correctly, almost everyone thought it was going to be Quinni (Chloe Hayden). I felt so vindicated that I was right all along.

We've seen the trope of female characters hated by the whole school in other Netflix teen series like Never Have I Ever, Ginny and Georgia and now Heartbreak High. What are the challenges of playing a character like that?

Weirdly enough, It's fun to play a character that ends up in sticky situations. I am not a method actor so I won't say that I'm just like Amerie in real life but I love iconic messy characters. I think that's what makes the series so interesting to watch, viewers want to see chaos, they want to watch someone's life fall apart simply because it's relatable.

Have you ever been in the same shoes as Amerie?

In some ways yes, I've been bullied and othered by others which I feel is like a rite of passage for most teenagers in this day and age but definitely not to the extent of Amerie's hate train this season.

Amerie forgives bird psycho at the end of the season because she feels he's in his own right to be hurt. What did you think of her decision?

I feel like she had the right to be angry at him but at the end of the day, there is a lot of power in forgiveness and what is important to remember is that everyone on the show is flawed in their own way so nobody is perfect and at that age, we're all just figuring things out.

Do you agree with it?

Yes I do, I believe it's essential to hold space in our hearts for forgiveness, I just released a song last week titled *Eulogy* about this same feeling and exploring the messiness of the human experience.

We get a glimpse of Amerie's home life this season. What did you think about who she is at home?

I think Amerie at home shows another side of her that we don't see much, she is a figure of authority and showcases her more nurturing qualities, especially in her interactions with her siblings.

How did you approach the scene where she's playing big sister when her younger sister has her period?.

I decided to approach the scene in a heartwarming manner that the younger me would have wanted to see onscreen.

Did you have a similar experience growing up?.

Yes, I am the youngest sibling out of 3 so I had firsthand experiences where my elder ones did the same for me.

The abortion scene in episode 7 is incredibly emotional, it's not very often we see such impactful moments on mainstream teen TV. What did you think about playing at that moment?.

It was an emotional day for me and one of the toughest moments to film. We didn't even have a lot of time to film so we only got a few takes in. But I spent a lot of time prepping for it beforehand. It was such a personal and important issue for me. I took the whole experience seriously, particularly as someone who is pro-abortion, it breaks my heart that many women around the world don't have the rights and privileges to get abortions so being able to portray the experience in a positive light was nice.

I love the costumes on the show, how much input do you get on what Amerie wears? Was there a conscious effort to not wear uniforms in the school scenes?.

Fashion is a major part of what makes up the show and our costume designer Rita Carmody is amazing, she listens to our inputs on the characters' outfits and fully understands what each character needs. Though Australian high schools typically have uniform dress codes, from season one there was always a conscious effort to wear Mufti so that viewers globally can fully immerse themselves in the show.

Do you ship Amerie with Malakai? What do you hope for her out of a new love interest?.

I just want Amerie to be happy as she's still exploring who she is but I do have a soft spot for Amerie and Malakai's relationship. At the end of the day, the show started off focusing on Amerie and Harper's friendship and I believe she can weather any situation as long as she's got her friend group at her back.

A large part of the reason Amerie and Malakai broke up was that he was exploring his sexuality, but Amerie states that if he had opened up to her, she would have supported him on his journey. How do you think Amerie would have done this?.

I don't think Amerie would have helped him per say, I took this statement to mean that she just needed more honesty and communication from him on where they stood because she had already spent a lot of time thinking their breakup was her fault.

Netflix gives the Australian high school experience a global platform. Do fans ever tell you that something on the show gave them culture shock?.

I know that the fans have a lot of questions about Australian culture but I don't get that in my DMs.it's just so incredible that Australian culture has gotten a lot of global recognition since the show aired and I feel blessed that I get to introduce it to the world.

The show is a reboot, were you nervous about living up to the standards of the original series?.

I wasn't nervous about living up to the standards because this *Heartbreak High* was never meant to be a perfect replica of the original, it's more a reimagining than a reboot so there was no pressure on me.

What scene was the most fun to film?.

The food fight scene at the beginning of episode 8 was so much fun to film and the camp scene in episode 4 was nostalgic because it felt like I was back in real school camp overall, episode 8 was my favorite part of the film of the entire season.

What do you want for Amerie next season?.

I just hope she is happy for once, with no toxicity involved because she's been through a lot.